



IN UNITY

The Magazine of the
Universal Fellowship of
Metropolitan Community Churches



by The Reverend Nancy Wilson

Upon coming home from General Conference '74 in August, I received some very encouraging news. The National Council of Churches' Professional Church Leadership Department was forming The Commission on Women in Ministry, and I was invited to represent MCC. The invitation was extended, the letter said, "even though MCC is not in the National Council of Churches—yet!" After checking with the Board of Elders, I accepted the invitation.

The first meeting of the Commission was September 30 to October 2 — a very chaotic time for me, since Heather Anderson and I were in the middle of moving to Worcester. I was rather chagrined to notice, during an incredible taxi ride from

La Guardia Airport to 475 Riverside Drive in New York that I still had some paint in my hair . . .

I had little idea of what the commission was supposed to be and do, and even less of an idea of what my own role was. I was afraid of being (once again!) the token lesbian. I had visions of gay women avoiding me, or whisking me off for private confessions, or spending most of my time telling straights, "what it's like to be gay." Blah!

I began to relax once arriving in Graymoor, in Garrison, New York. A new kind of excitement began to come over me. People who I had only heard about, or met briefly, and who apparently knew who I was, greeted me enthusiastically. I began to sense the history of this first meeting — a "Here we are at last!" kind of feeling. Many women, gay and straight, coming together, after being isolated and alone, and struggling with all sorts of issues — such as the recent controversial ordination of eleven Episcopal women and the recent "firings" by the Presbyterian church of women and minorities. I began to feel the pulls and tugs of my own dual affiliation — with *all* women, as well as the gay community; both women and men.

The Church universal is in crisis about many things, and I figured I arrived on the scene just in time to embody two "emerging social issues" (women and gays).

Having always had mixed (if not angry) feelings for lesbians who hide in the womens' movement, particularly in the church, and who say to me, "I can't deal with two issues at once," I came ready for confrontation ("Maybe you can't, but you have to!") As a human being I could understand all too well the dilemma of a lesbian in a ministry in a denomination that is not even open to women in ministry, much less gays. My self-righteousness began to recede as my appreciation of the struggles of others increased. And yet, my very presence at that commission meeting was a confrontation — challenging those who could come out, to do so.

(Continued bottom of page 11)

National Council Calls Women

OAKLAND — The Northwest District Women's Conference established a women's scholarship open to any woman in the Fellowship. Women in the district are currently busy raising money to fund the scholarship.

Women interested in the scholarship must be a member of MCC and must be seeking to attend the Good Samaritan Bible School. Applications should have been filed by February 1, 1975.

The application requires a brief history of the applicant's involvement with MCC, her reasons for applying for the scholarship, a statement of her call to the ministry, and an explanation of why she wishes to attend the school rather than participate in the local exhorter program.

The applicant must also have a recommendation from her pastor and another member of the pastoral staff. She must also have the approval of her church's women's group and the church's board of directors.

The approval must come from the women's group and the Board, not just the chairperson of each.

Applications may be filed with Betty Pederson in care of the Oakland church. Additional information should also be requested from Ms. Pederson.

NEW YORK—The Rev. Ann Montague a native of Washington State and for the past year a student at Samaritan Bible School in Los Angeles, has been called as assistant pastor of MCC New

York. At its quarterly meeting November 3, 1974, the congregation voted to extend Ms. Montague an invitation, furthering a goal set last spring by the Northeast District of having women as pastors, assistant pastors or associate pastors in each chartered church by May 1976.

A native of Pullman, Washington, Rev. Montague received her A.B. degree from Eastern Washington State College in 1971 and undertook graduate study in sociology at the University of Washington, Seattle. During the summer of 1969 she participated in the Northwest Institutional Study Abroad Program in London. Active in the Socialist Workers Party, she was candidate for Secretary of State of Washington and garnered

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STAFF

Chairman, Board of Publications
Editor, IN UNITY

REV. TOM TAYLOR
1333 W. Sycamore, #30
Willows, California 95988

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U.S. District Correspondents

Great Lakes
REV. RAY THOMAS
P. O. Box 39235
Cincinnati, Ohio 45239
513/791-2083

Northwest
REV. MICHAEL ENGLAND
P. O. Box 11607
Salt Lake City, Utah 84110
801/531-9434

Southwest
JAMES MILLER
213/467-1002

Northeast
REV. LAURENCE G. BERNIER
131 Cambridge Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02114
617/523-7664

Southeast
REV. KEITH DAVIS
P. O. Box 370963
Miami, Florida 33127
305/758-7190

South-Central
GARY R. LEWIS
P. O. Box 60738
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73106
405/528-3100

Mid-Central
REV. CAROL CURETON
P. O. Box 3407
St. Louis, Missouri 63143
314/647-6419

World Correspondents
Canada
REV. ROBERT WOLFE
20 Trinity Square
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5G 1B1

Europe
JO McVAY-ABBOTT
61 Earl's Court Square
London SW5 9DG, England
01/828-8172

Africa
FELIX MACLEKEE
P. O. Box 266
Zaria, Nigeria

Australia
ANTHONY BABICCI
P. O. Box 207, Paddington
Sydney, New South Wales 2021

Advertising Manager
ROBERT HARMON
535 Burnett Avenue, Apt. 1
San Francisco, California 94131
415/824-1015

IN UNITY

WINTER ISSUE

Volume IV, No. 5

The Magazine of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

EDITORIAL/REV. TOM TAYLOR

I'm counting your thoughts of love and joy in seeking your forgiveness for the lateness of this issue of IN UNITY. No one is more aware than I, it is now months late. You should have received this issue back when you were thinking of ghosts and goblins.

I want to apologize for the lateness, not for the issue itself. I believe what you are holding in your hands is worth waiting for and certainly worth reading. It retains the spirit and the standards set when I was handed the reigns just one year ago.

Faced with a deadline without copy — it is difficult to maintain rigid deadlines when we depend so completely on volunteer contributions. I decided it would be better to delay publication rather than lower standards. Considering the current offering you now have, I think that was the right decision. It is your judgement, however, that will make the final determination.

It was also decided to change the publication times to Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter to better coincide with the Fellowship's calendar and provide publication flexibility. It is most difficult for a quarterly magazine to be "current" on fast-breaking news. It is hoped the new publication dates will better meet the needs of the Fellowship.

This is my fourth issue and it comes at the end of a bountiful year for both the Fellowship and myself. The year hasn't been without its bumps and jars, but on the whole, God has blessed.

The Fellowship has continued to expand, until now it is truly international in scope. Little did those twelve worshipping with Rev. Perry six years ago expect where it would lead. Yet, somehow, I think they had to be aware of the great things God had in store.

There has been dissension within our ranks and persecution from without, but through God we have prevailed. That is as it should be.

For myself, the year has been wonderful. God called me to His ministry and provided the opportunity to use what journalistic talent I possessed for Him. There were some disappointments, but these were lost in the outpourings of love expressed to me during Conference. People from all over, many whom I had never met, came to me to express their concern for me. Others just came to say "thanks" and give praise for our efforts with IN UNITY. All came with love. This is Christianity working — this was the reason for the birth and growth of UFMCC.

The Fellowship is here, Brothers and Sisters, because God wants it to be, and because there is Love. Take that love away, drive God out with pettiness and selfishness; do that, and UFMCC will fail. *We cannot succeed without Him.*

We must look to Him for support and guidance for we surely cannot do it by ourselves. As long as we put Him at the center of our lives, and as long as He remains the foundation of our church, nothing can stand in our way.

However delayed, I would take this opportunity to wish you all a year filled with the Lord's love and His blessings.

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BOUQUETS A READER'S FORUM BRICKBATS

It is important that we work together to build the Kingdom of God. In order to accomplish this we must communicate. We welcome your letters expressing your views on any subject. This column will be a forum open to any and all. There are a few ground rules however. 1) We will not publish anonymous letters. We will withhold the name of the writer, if requested, but the letter must be signed. 2) Letters without constructive criticism, either positive or negative, will not be considered for print, nor will personal attacks on churches, their ministers, staff or individual members. 3) Letters seeking information will be forwarded to the individual or department which can best reply to your inquiries. Send all letters to IN UNITY, 240 North Lassen Street, Willows, California 95988.

MORE COPIES!

Dear Tom,

We are now receiving 25 copies of IN UNITY. Could you send us 50 more and make our total 75 copies for every issue?

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Your brother in Christ,

B.C. VAN HECKE
Church Secretary
Los Angeles, MCC

The standard order to all congregations is 25 copies. Any congregations needing more can order them in multiples of five. Please send all change of address or change in the order to 1333 W. Sycamore, Apt. 30, Willows, CA 95988. Ed.

JEWISH BRETHREN SEEK HELP

Dear Tom,

During the past year, a large number of Jewish gay organizations have organized.

In an attempt to coordinate the activities of these organizations, would you please publish the following address in IN UNITY and request that persons interested in corresponding with us do so at this address:

Jay Freier
MCC Synagogue of Greater Miami
P.O. Box 330132
Coconut Grove, Fla 33133

Thank you,

JAY

Many gay Synagogues have organized in cities where MCC is active. If you have any Jewish friends or know of such a group, you might want to make this information available to them. Ed.

SEEKS BACK ISSUES

Dear Sirs,

I have just come across a back issue of IN UNITY. I am wondering if there is any way possible to have a couple of copies of each issue sent that we may share among the MCC people inside this institution. I once in a while get an issue through the

Prison Ministry, but not on a regular basis.

IN UNITY is very much enjoyed by all here and any back issues that are available would also be appreciated.

Thank you.

RB
Vacaville, CA

We have made arrangements to send copies of each issue to Vacaville. We are also establishing the mechanics with the Prison Ministry staff to distribute copies in other institutions. Those of you who have friends in institutions might wish to arrange for subscriptions. A possible outreach for an individual or church would be to cover the cost of distributing the magazine through the Prison Ministry. Inquiries on subscriptions or bulk distribution costs should be addressed to 1333 W. Sycamore, #30, Willows, CA 95988. Ed.

WORD FROM DENMARK

"But you belong to God, my children, and have defeated the false prophets; because the Spirit who is in you is more powerful than the spirit in those, who belong to the world." 1 John 4:4.

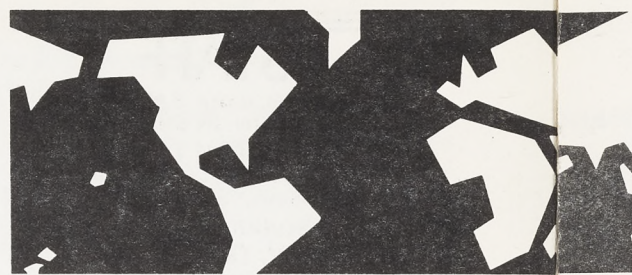
Dear Sisters and Brothers,

This is a fresh greeting of love and fellowship from your sisters and brothers in Copenhagen. We have been very happy to have among us the Rev. Lee Carlton. His visit was a visit of inspiration and joy.

We should like to send a special greeting to Don Greenfield, who worshipped with us in Copenhagen some months ago, and by whose personal sacrifice of money, Rev. Lee Carlton's visit to the Open Church Group in Copenhagen was made possible. Thank you Don, and may God reward you abundantly!

The Open Church Group in Copenhagen would like to suggest that we get a woman representative from the MCC over, next time the Board of Elders decide to send someone officially. More specifically we are asking for the Rev. Freda Smith — as we are praying that it may be so, would our brothers and sisters in LA and San Jose join us?

(Continued on page 11)



NEWSPAPER STORY CREATES INTEREST IN CHRIST THE KING MCC

OKLAHOMA CITY—There has been a tremendous surge of interest in Christ the King MCC since an Associated Press story on the church was published in the Sunday Oklahoman, Aug. 11, Rev. Robert Falls reported.

"Most of it has been very positive," Rev. Falls said. "We have also received a few crank calls and there has been a little vandalism."

The AP story, which was reportedly carried over the national wire, gives a straight-forward account of services and a brief history of UFMCC.

The article by Ruth Kleinecke stresses the openness of MCC and its basic belief in Jesus Christ.

EAST BAY ADOPTS NIGERIA MISSION

OAKLAND—The East Bay MCC has adopted the Nigeria mission and will begin offering direct support, Rev. Gary Wilson reported. The East Bay Church is one of the first congregations to elect to participate in a new mission program suggested by Rev. Lee Carlton, director of the Board of Evangelism and World Missions.

"It is the hope of our local church this action will spur other congregations to make similar steps," Rev. Wilson said. "Our step was made in Faith, not in the light of any excess money in the treasury — there is no such excess."

Any congregation wishing to adopt a mission church should do so in coordination with Rev. Carlton, Wilson stressed. "Certainly the work of the Lord will be done more effectively in order and with concert," he added.

CARLTON GOES DOWN UNDER SANDMIRE CALLED TO L.A.

LOS ANGELES—Rev. Lee Carlton, executive secretary to the UFMCC Board of World Missions and Evangelism, will leave the pulpit here for Australia (see MCC Circles the Globe elsewhere in this issue), where he will become coordinator for Church Extension in Australia and New Zealand.

Rev. Elder James Sandmire, pastor of San Francisco has been called to fill the pulpit here. Sandmire officially resigned his post in San Francisco, January 19.

GAY ARCHIVES STARTED

PHILADELPHIA—A national gay archives, as projected by the late Dr. Howard J. Brown, is being established by the committee of gay activists formed by Dr. Brown to carry out the project.

According to committee coordinator Barbara Gittings, the archives is intended to bring together gay-related personal papers of prominent homosexual men and women, as well as books with homosexual themes and every kind of gay movement material.

The committee is having preliminary discussions with representatives from the New

DATELINE

York Public Library about housing the gay collection at the library's famous Fifth Avenue location.

Establishment of a national gay archives was one of Dr. Brown's last major projects in his endeavors to leave a legacy of works befitting future generations of gay people. He is best known in the gay community as a crusading gay professional and as a co-founder of the National Gay Task Force. In October 1973 he disclosed via the *New York Times* that he was homosexual. As a former cabinet official in New York City Mayor Lindsay's administration, Dr. Brown hoped that his announcement would spur other gays in positions in the public eye to declare themselves, thus offering role models for younger gays and helping to free them from the need to hide.

In the weeks prior to his death on February 1, 1975, Dr. Brown had expressed to the archives committee and to friends his intention to will his Greenwich Village home to the national gay archives so that proceeds from the sale of the house would provide some endowment capital to help finance the collection. In addition, he had urged other gay persons with valuable assets to consider making funds available to the archives by similar legacies which he forthrightly called "death monies."

Committee members are going ahead with negotiations for space for the collection and with plans for basic operation of the archives. Persons interested in helping the committee to launch the national gay archives may contact coordinator Barbara Gittings at P.O. Box 2383, Philadelphia, PA 19103, phone (215) 382-3222.

FROM THE SOUTHEAST

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT/USA—The next Southeastern District Conference will be hosted by the "Church of the Holy Spirit", May 23-24-25 (Memorial Day weekend). Pastor Wilson and his Boards are already planning for the onslaught of visiting Metropolitans.

The Elders were very surprised and pleased to receive our gift of \$400.00 which we voted to send the fellowship. We hope it will encourage other districts to do the same.

The Rev. Peter Wilson is also serving a new group in Ft. Myers, Florida. It is functioning as a "parish" of the Fort Lauderdale church. We have sent our greetings to the new group on behalf of the District. We think Peter is to be complimented for undertaking this extra task.

The Rev. Lee Spangenberg reports increased attendance in the Orlando Study Group. We are praying sincerely for the Orlando people to "get it together" and especially for Lee to receive a powerful anointing in the Lord in preaching and ministering.

The Tampa church under the leadership of Rev. Elder John "Papa" Hose, is making excellent progress and has been helping the Orlando MCC by visiting at the 2 p.m. service. The district coordinators have been studying the feasibility of sponsoring a Study Group in Pinellas County, under the guidance of the Tampa ministry.

STUDY GROUP IN SOUTH AMERICA

BUENOS AIRES, So. America—An ecumenical study group is being organized here.

It is the first group believed to be organized in South America and is expected to seek affiliation soon with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

FOURTH CHURCH OPENS IN CANADA

HAMILTON, Ontario, Canada—The group here becomes the fourth church in Canada to join the Fellowship.

Exhorter Eldridge MacMillan of Toronto is the worship coordinator.

Hamilton, like the three other Canadian MCC churches, is tithing 10 percent to the Fellowship and 10 percent to church extension.

BROOKLYN ADOPTS AFFIRMATION REV. HOWARD WELLS

BROOKLYN—MCC Brooklyn is a peculiar church in that for its first year, we did not put as high a premium on the number of persons participating in the congregational life as most other MCC congregations usually do. In fact, for our first nine months we didn't advertise, except by word of mouth. We wanted to develop a sense of ministry within a small group before expanding. We dealt with the question, "Now that we're here and holding weekly worship services, where do we go from this point?" We knew if a small group could not answer that question in an adequate manner, a large group could not fare any better.

In addition, we felt we would be doing a disservice to newcomers if we could offer them no more than a formal Sunday worship service and some sort of social activity during the week. We knew we could — and had to — do a better job. We began asking questions about our faith, the basic one being, "What does the Christian gospel have to say to me as a gay person as I struggle to survive in a society that hates me and denies my right to personhood?" At least once a week, over a period of months, the entire congregation gathered at some member's home to discuss this question and its ramifications. In dealing with it, we were led to ask ourselves many other questions. We didn't come to any firm answers, but ironically, in the course of asking and pondering them, each person experienced an extraordinary degree of spiritual growth! I don't think any of us want to arrive at final, conclusive answers — it is the characteristic of their open-endedness that leads to spiritual growth!

Most of us have taken a "leap of faith" as a result of our studies. Specifically in the course of talking about being in the closet (we call it a coffin), and trying to focus the Christian gospel on that basic situation in gay life, we came to feel that being in a closet is a state of sin.

Affirmation of Faith that is the product of our focusing the Gospel on the problem of being in the closet follows. As far as we know this is the first time a biblically-grounded foundation has been provided for the argument to "come out." We strongly feel that if God has turned away from gay people, it's not because we are gay, but because we have been lured into worshipping another god — fear, but that's a sinful state that can be corrected by repentance, and we think the gay religious movement should issue a strong, sustained call for repentance on

the issue of being in the closet, to expose the lie that leads gay people into the closet and to proclaim the Word of truth and liberation in its place.

Affirmation of Faith was adopted by the members of MCC-Brooklyn on our first anniversary service. It was done in the format of a petition for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in which the members prayed that God, through the Holy Spirit, would show them how to live out this commitment.

We welcome your comments and criticisms on what we've done so far and hope that MCC-Brooklyn will be able to touch bases with you on similar concerns in the future. Our Affirmation of Faith is as follows:

After much personal and communal reflection, study of the Scriptures and prayer, we, the members of Metropolitan Community Church of Brooklyn and Christian friends of that community of faith, have reached the following conclusions and affirmations:

1. We recognize that structuring one's life around anything but love for God and love for our neighbor as ourselves is a state of sin and indeed constitutes idolatry. Specifically, we recognize that structuring of one's life around fear is detrimental to human wholeness and spiritual growth, and fragments personality, and community.

2. We further recognize that the God whose love for us is witnessed in the Bible and proclaimed in the Christ Event did not bring us into being in order that we might shackle and enslave ourselves to fear.

3. We further recognize that as gay persons, the fear that is most poignantly evidenced within our community is the fear of exposure of our sexual identity and thus constitutes a rejection of God's claim on us as His beloved gay sons and daughters.

4. We further recognize that our enslavement to that fear constitutes a rejection of the legitimacy and inherent goodness of our sexual identity and thus constitutes a rejection of God's claim on us as His beloved gay sons and daughters.

5. We further recognize that the popular conception of "coming out" is not a rejection of the tyranny of fear but rather is a subtle accommodation to it. Fear still reigns over our lives in the form of our continued participation in the value system and institutions of the gay sub-culture that are grounded in that fear; we are still victims of the psychological and spiritual wounds that have been inflicted on our persons by our unconscious internalization of homophobia.

6. We further recognize our state of helplessness in the face of this fear that is created by a homophobic society and sustained by our internalization of it.

In view of these conclusions, we make the following affirmations:

1. We affirm that the Christ Event was the final and perfect testament of God's love for all people, including His gay sons and daughters.

2. We affirm that the Christ Event was the decisive victory over any form of tyranny that would make our lives less than they have the potential to be.

(Continued on page 11)

NIGERIA GROWS THROUGH SACRIFICE

The real purpose of my recent visit to Nigeria was to learn exactly the situation of the sisters and brothers who have been corresponding with us now for some two years. Believe me it was a personal and spiritual experience which I shall never forget. I saw Christ in the face of a wrinkled old black woman, begging for something to eat. I saw Him again in the face of a five year-old boy with no legs, seen begging as he crossed the road in front of the American Embassy in Kaduna.

Despite all of the circumstances which exist in Third World countries, where poverty is an everyday experience, low income is a thing which one accepts and the cost of living continues to soar, Nigeria is rapidly becoming a progressive country. Progress will not be immediate for the general population, however. The average income is about 1 naria (63 cents in U.S. money) a day! Costs for most items such as clothing, shoes, transportation and gasoline, are equivalent to prices paid in West Germany and France. Inflation is a major concern because most products are imported.

Population control is also a matter of concern. Official figures show Nigeria has the largest population in Africa. Some 83 million people are crowded in an area about the size of Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Alabama. Add to this the fact that Nigeria has four major languages, extreme poverty in the North, and depriving living conditions in the South, and one has a little idea of living conditions in Nigeria.

Nigerian history is not to be envied. Chattel slavery existed there as late as 1906 under British law. Nigeria became an independent country in the early 1960's and was plunged immediately into a civil war lasting from 1966 to 1971. The results are still evident everywhere. I saw hundreds of people with missing limbs and other physical impairments. The most saddening aspect was the almost total lack of rehabilitation programs available for these unfortunate sisters and brothers.

The Nigerian Christian community historically lived only in the East and South. Following the war, most are living in otherwise Moslem areas and without identifiable churches to minister to their needs.

Two gay brothers reading of MCC in the Jehovah's Witness publication, *Awake*, sought out the Rev. Sylvanus Maduka, a former Methodist clergyman, and encouraged him to establish an ecumenical Christian church to be open to all people.

Most of the members travel on foot (the pastor ten miles to church and ten home) to services, and there is a special Bible class or worship every day of the week. Saturday is given to cleaning the church. When I arrived at the small mud brick building with its red and white sign over the door reading

"Metropolitan Community Church — Zaria" and the fellowship flag made by the Nigerians) flapping over the tin roof, I couldn't help but weep. The members were inside scrubbing the hard packed floor with water they had carried over a mile!

I was deeply touched by Sister Maduka's sacrifice. She had sold one of her three sewing machines with which she supplements the family income (sixty cents for making a complete dress) in order to assure enough money for my hotel bill.

Despite a severe lack of medical attention (one hospital and six doctors for 800,000 people) Rev. Maduka visits the sick and offers prayers for his members, regardless of how far away they live. Brother Felix Macleree, the secretary, teaches nightly courses of typing, reading and writing. The treasurer, Brother Friday Okonowo conducts the choir and teaches also at prayer meetings and Sunday School.

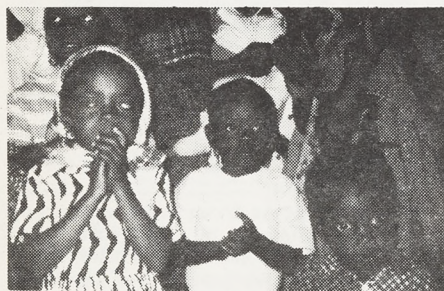
Sunday, November 17, was the dedication of the church. I preached to over 150 people as Brother Felix interpreted. The same beautiful spirit we feel in other MCC's was everywhere present. Such singing as I've never heard; the quietness of Holy Communion, interrupted only by the goats across the street; the offertory, where everyone danced down the aisle to leave their small offerings on the altar, were deeply moving. I praise God for the Universal Fellowship in Nigeria where, out of 150 people, two gay brothers sat, worshipped, and shared with all God's children unafraid and loved, because we are there with Christ.

I've encouraged the Nigerian church to correspond with our churches and explain their local needs and circumstances. One word of caution however — you should reread their letters several times — understanding that the language meaning may be lost in the translation from Ibo into English. Please call if you feel you can help in World Church Extension.

CANADA SUPPORTS CHURCH EXTENSION

The Ottawa church under the direction of Worship Coordinator Phil Speranza, has reached the required number of members and financial stability to obtain Mission status. Congratulations MCC Ottawa!

From Montreal we also learn that the Study Group there has been reactivated under the direction of Worship Coordinator Riener Lauferf. The Toronto congregation is maintaining a steady growth rate. By the way, have you heard that the Canadian churches contribute 8 per cent to the ministry of Church Extension?



Church School



Worship Service



The Rev. Sylvanus Maduka

/ ENGLAND / SCOTLAND / BELGIUM / DENMARK / NIGERIA / AUSTRALIA

We are happy to report increased growth and activity among the Australian congregations. Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne recently met together to celebrate the first anniversary of the Christ Community Church (now M.C.C.) in Melbourne. The words of Adelaide pastor, Rev. Stan Harris, in summing up the conclave are descriptive of our Fellowship throughout. "Sydney, a bit high but Pentecostal; Melbourne, very Protestant; Adelaide, well, sort of the ecclesiastical cock-tail!" These very phrases have been applied to various member churches within the greater Universal Fellowship. I think it is beautiful to see such ecumenical spirit exists and is developing in the Australian churches as well.

News comes to us also that a new study group is in formation in the queen city of the North, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, under the direction of Worship Coordinator Ken Goodenough. Ken has worked ardently during the past year with an ecumenical fellowship group known as "Cross Section". This group, now being dissolved, will become a part of the Metropolitan Community Church of Brisbane.

In Perth, Rev. Mario Schoenmaker has suffered a heart attack and is presently in the hospital. Please remember him in your prayers. The congregation church there is still anticipating his arrival in Dallas for General Conference '75.

Gary Pye, Graham Donkin, and Gary's mother, Ms. Pye, of Sydney are presently visiting fellowship churches and Dignity (a Roman Catholic Gay Group) meetings in the U.S. and Canada. Please extend to them a loving welcome.

DENMARK MINISTRY PROMOTES CHANGE

My visit to Copenhagen was a very exciting portion of this trip recently. I was greeted warmly by the Board of Directors and the Rev. Bjorn Marcussen of the Open Church Group who are presently studying the By-Laws of the Universal Fellowship in consideration towards further association with the total outreach of the Metropolitan Community Churches.

I was happy to be on hand when the Open Church Group applied for acceptance into the Copenhagen Ecumenical Church Council, and spent one evening with the Council's Board discussing the needs of Gay people religiously and in society-at-large. I am happy to report that the Board of the Ecumenical Church Council voted overwhelmingly to accept the Open Church Group into full fellowship. They have also agreed to sell MCC and Open Church Group publications in the Ecumenical Center's book store.

The church in Copenhagen continues to make progress and and I believe with continued work will become a leading force in the Scandinavian countries, promoting change within the established state/church structures.

MCC CIRCLES THE GLOBE

by REV. LEE CARLTON

GREAT BRITAIN MINISTRY IS EXPANDING

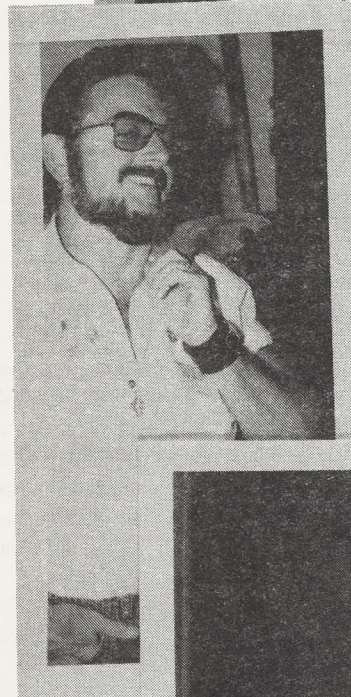
Metropolitan Community Church in London has reached standing room only in the Pemlico Aid Center since the arrival of the Rev. Thomas Bigelow who was confirmed unanimously by the congregation as their pastor. In one of these strange coincidences with which we credit God, I was present to perform the official installation service for him and witness the fantastic numerical and financial growth which the London church is currently experiencing.

The Birmingham Study Group has officially joined the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and brother Jo McVay-Abbott, exhorter of the London MCC is going there as Worship Coordinator.

In Edinburgh, Scotland, I met with brother Graham Cameron and discussed the feasibility of Metropolitan Community Church being established in that city following a letter of application to UFMCC, received in Los Angeles in October. We have granted Study Group recognition to the group there and earnestly solicit your prayers for the MCC in Scotland and the International Conference on Gay Rights which will have met there by the time you read this report, last December.



Rev. Bigelow and Birmingham member Brian at the Campaign for Homosexual Equality Fair Booth — London



San Francisco
August 1974



Happiness is going to **GENERAL**



Photos by
JOHN PROWSE

CONFERENCE!

"I believe our cause is just, and so long as we continue to put all our trust in the Lord, I believe the Lord will lead us further on our pilgrimage of liberation."

THE BIOGRAPHY & OPINIONS OF: ROY BIRCHARD

The Reverend Roy Birchard, 31, pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of New York, grew up in Shoreham, Vermont, where his father was the rural mail carrier and his mother the town clerk. He attended Berea College in Kentucky where he majored in English and edited the student newspaper, graduating in 1965.

He then attended Union Theological Seminary in New York. While there, he did his field work in a predominantly Black, inner-city Methodist church in Brooklyn and sang in the choir ("which is where I came to appreciate church music with some vigor and soul"). Following an intern year as an instructor in English and religion at Lincoln University, a predominantly Black private college in Pennsylvania, he was an organizer with the draft resistance ("but the government didn't want a lot of martyr-seminarians, so we never went to trial."). In the academic area, he majored in New Testament and wrote a thesis on "*A Redaktionsgeschichtlial Analysis of the Antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount*," graduating in 1969. In June of that year he was ordained in his home church as a minister of the United Church of Christ.

Planning to pursue a career as a college professor of theology and literature, he then went on to the University of Wisconsin at Madison where he did the classwork on a master's degree in English.

"But after a few months of serious analysis," Birchard says, "I decided that I had to face the fact I was gay, and that as a Christian minister I had an obligation to try to find out what the Church was going to do for gay people. So I left Wisconsin and went back to New York and went around the offices of my denomination, presenting myself as an openly-gay UCC minister.

"I found some people who encouraged me, but none who felt able to do much to help. They said things like, 'Young man, we'll give you all the letters of recommendation in the world, and we don't have any money for a program.'

"So I got a job to support myself and became a member of the legal action committee of the Gay Activists Alliance of New York which at that time gave me a tremendously valuable exposure to the leaders of the then-emerging gay movement and to their ideas. It was an ideal education. And incredibly, an employment agency sent me to one of the 'mainline' Protestant denominations to work as a secretary, and they took me on even after I hit them with my GAA work. I stayed with them until just recently, working up to become an editor/writer.

"In November 1971, Howard Wells came to New York, and several of us started the MCC here, with me editing the Newsletter which eventually turned into *The Gay Christian*. When Howard went on to do graduate work at Union Seminary. I became pastor.

"We all wish our congregation were larger and stronger. It has grown slowly, but, I think, solidly. The people in the church are really fine. We have so many kinds of competition in New York that the people who do come to us are really pretty much motivated by religious convictions. It's not as though the bars are closed on Sunday, and there's no place else to go. There are also several other predominantly gay religious groups in New York with whom we maintain generally good relations. Once or twice a year, particularly on Christopher Street Day, we have a big ecumenical service which goes over very well.

"I believe MCC has a real future in New York. There are an incredible number of gay people here of all kinds, many of them running away from small towns and cities, and running away from the Church as they knew it. It's really a long, hard process convincing people we're not just more of the same. But I'm glad to say we've convinced some of them!

"Because several of the 'mainline' denominations have their national offices in New York, one of my part-time concerns has been pushing the gay issue and MCC's work with them. To this end, I have worked on an *ad hoc* National Task Force on Gay People in the Church with the Rev. Bill Johnson and the Rev. Rodger Harrison of MCC Costa Mesa, among others. Last year, we had MCC's Spiritual Renewal in our church five blocks from the hotel where the governing board of the National Council of Churches was meeting. Some of the governing board members came over to hear Rev. Perry and Willie Smith, and we heard about it through the grapevine for months afterward.

"Working at changing attitudes in the 'established churches' can be terribly frustrating, like chipping away at an iceberg, and I don't think I could have survived personally without MCC. But I don't think we're going to see state legislatures change the laws concerning us until they're convinced the other churches will support them in those changes.

"I am not one of the people who thinks of MCC as an 'interim-church', or that someday we're all going to end up back in the churches we have come from. I got a lot of my ideas from working in the Black community. There are Black Methodists and Presbyterians, but there's also an A.M.E. Zion Church, and everybody knows who that church represents. And like the Black churches, I think MCC has received that 'extra blessing' the Lord gives the oppressed. I think we have an evangelical Spirit the other churches would do well to look to. But I hope we in MCC continue to let all the other Christian churches know that what they teach about gay people *does* affect us, and we're not going to just walk quietly away by ourselves. I believe our cause is just, and so long as we continue to put *all* our trust in the Lord, I believe the Lord will lead us further on our pilgrimage of liberation."

MCC BROOKLYN'S AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

3. We affirm that we share in Christ's victory when we proclaim him by faith to be our Savior and Redeemer. Since we share in Christ's victory, we share in the fruits of that victory. For gay people, one of those fruits is the power to cast off the shackles of fear of exposure; not to do so is to reject the victory won for us by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ; such a rejection constitutes an act of sin.

4. We affirm our rights, as gay Christians, to share in the fruits of the victory won for us by our risen Lord. Therefore, from this moment forward, we hereby commit ourselves to cease and desist from structuring our lives around the fear of exposure of our God-given sexual identity. In so doing, we affirm the goodness of our personhood, our sonship and daughtership to God and our discipleship to Jesus Christ. We serve only one Master — the God whose love for us is witnessed by our redemption from the tyranny of fear through the Christ Event.

5. We affirm that by our stepping out in this act of faith we are hereby trusting that God will show us how to live out this commitment. We need only the will to obey; God will show us the way.

We make this commitment as a community of faith, fully realizing that each of us starts from a place that differs from his neighbor's and that we will move toward full realization of our personhood, each at a different pace, each in a different way. But we also realize that we will move together as a community, since we are by our faith commitment the corporate body of the resurrected and triumphant Christ.

Since our Lord was a loving servant to humankind, we recognize our witness as a community of faith to be that of a servant, ministering to those gay persons who are still enslaved to fear of exposure and proclaiming to them that their victory was won on a cross 2000 years ago; they need only to claim their share of the fruits of that decisive victory in order to free themselves

from the tyranny of homophobia and its accompanying state of spiritual death.

We make this commitment in the format of a Baptism since we are truly prepared to die to our old identity and value perspective in order that we might be raised, by God's grace, to a new value perspective and to new life.

The Old has passed away; behold, the New.

Editor's Note: This Affirmation is a local affirmation adopted by the Brooklyn congregation. Development of the Affirmation was a significant part of the spiritual growth of the congregation. We, like Rev. Wells, felt others might be interested. You might share your comments on the Affirmation with us or you can write direct to Rev. Wells.

NATIONAL COUNCIL CALLS WOMEN (Continued from page 2)

I was one of the first out of sixty women to introduce myself and present some concerns. The tension my statement produced was obvious. All around the table not one other woman echoed my concerns. I began to feel a little desperate until the next to last woman stood up and said, (among other things) "I am a former semi-closeted lesbian." She had not planned to say it—but maybe she did so out of sheer compassion for my alone-ness. The Spirit works in mysterious ways...

Then things began to move. During the next two days of searching and discussion, the words, "Gay advocacy," and "Black women, lesbians, and other minority women," were rehearsed into everyone's consciousness. People would glance at me shyly, and I would grin back. No, they weren't being tokenistic — they were hearing what had not been spoken or heard before; they were integrating the concerns of lesbians into the total concern of the commission. *Amen!*

During the course of the meetings in which we dealt with sexism in all its economic, political and theological manifestations, and with the concept of ministry itself, about fifteen women "came out" to me — and not behind closed doors so much either. One-fourth of the women there (at least) were lesbians! It was true then, that gay people (particularly women?) who wanted to do ministry, but needed to avoid the fishbowl existence of the parish, went into church leadership (bureaucracy). Only four of us at that meeting were "employed" in local parishes.

Questions came flooding about MCC. *I found that MCC did not have a terribly good reputation among feminists — but I was proud to tell how far we have come in a few years — especially in terms of women in*

ministry. Because we are still small, our Fellowship is still open and flexible, able to respond fully to issues such as sexism. I also enjoyed surprising people by telling them Heather and I work in a gas station—until MCC-Worcester can support us. I am not proud of MCC's poverty, but women were amazed at what has happened on faith and a shoestring.

By the end of the conference, my sisters, gay and straight, were clear that the oppression of gay people, and the struggle of lesbians in the ministry is an important issue for the National Council of Churches Commission on Women in Ministry. At our next meeting in February, gay and straight women who feel the institutional church is *not* dealing with the issue of sexuality, among other things, are going to have a workshop on "Liberation Church." One of the major things to be discussed is MCC as an alternative church structure possibility.

There was one problem I had with the conference: With the exception of Carter Heyward's brief participation, it seemed difficult for us to speak and relate, without pretense or embarrassment, in terms of the Gospel. Possibly, it was that, coming from MCC, I am more comfortable relating in an ecumenical setting. Perhaps the growing alienation of women from the institutional church has produced a lot of painful spiritual alienation. We dealt with the church primarily as an economic and political structure, not as a broken Body of Christ. Some women cling tenaciously to old styles and language, some are timid about experimenting with new language and styles, and others seem tired of trying. I occasionally had the haunting feeling I would be heard if I spoke about gay liberation, but... dare I mention the Gospel? Jesus Christ?

I have been told I am too young to be so "heavy". But in my 2½ years as a "humble parish priest" in this incredible life, I have been leading, I have struggled a great deal with the-

ology, especially when I have had a gun or knife pointed at me, or spent endless nights on our "crisis phone", or faced hostile audiences and congregations, or baptized the child of a proud woman/mother whose life has changed because of MCC. I have seen miracles; I have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord into the lives of many people and into our history. I praise God who has given me such a life, and such a "community-family" of faith.

The last night of the conference several of the lesbians met together, to hug each other, to cry, to dance, to be unafraid, to celebrate:

*Yes, I am wise, but it's wisdom born
of pain,
Yes, I have paid the price, but look
how much I've gained,
If I have to, I can do anything, I am strong,
I am invincible, I am woman I.*

I am human. I am God's own child, freed from the lies that have enslaved us. Free to claim the abundant life promised to us all through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



THE SPRING ISSUE WILL FEATURE

SPECIAL MINISTRIES
OF THE
UNITED FELLOWSHIP

AND WATCH FOR

A PREVIEW OF THE
CONFERENCE IN DALLAS

COMING IN THE SUMMER ISSUE

What Price Unity? Asks McVay-Abbott

Editor's Note: The following is an editorial by Jo McVay-Abbott of the Fellowship of Christ the Liberator MCC in London, published in the August issue of Focal. His comments, published before General Conference, sums it all up.

The theme of the General Conference will be "There is One Body, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism" (Eph.4:4-5). A plea for unity in Christ.

The UFMCC, like others, is rocked by dissension and differing opinions — it is foolish to expect otherwise, for wherever something good starts happening for God, you can bet the Devil will start playing on our weaknesses. When that happens our only strength lies in Christ.

But what unity and for what?

Any gathering of weak human beings can be calculated to have its share of bruised egos, hurt pride, offended principles. By uniting in love, we can, if we

really make the effort, come to greater understanding of each other, each of us supplying the healing balm of love. Then can we hope to move towards the greater unity of the one Body in Christ that we pray for — when 'ecumenism' will be a quaint word from the chequered history of the Christian church.

But in MCC, we face an even more urgent need for unity — unity in a common and awesome task.

The Medical Research Council, sponsored by the British Medical Council, reported recently that it estimated the incidence of homosexuality was one in eight of the population. Let's say the population of England is 50 million; that means about 6 million gays. Let's be generous and say 10 percent are practicing Christians (the national average is said to be 5 per cent); that will leave perhaps 5,400,000 non-Christian gays. 5,400,000 who perhaps had no opportunity to hear

the Good News because their ears had been stopped up by prejudice, hypocrisy, and hatred. 5,400,000 to whom, if no one else will, MCC must take the Gospel of Our Lord and Savior.

How bruised is our wounded Christ! How long must He suffer for those missing 5,400,000? How do our bruised egos, hurt pride and offended principles compare? What price unity in that cause and how does it compare with the price Our Lord paid for us?

And I haven't even mentioned Wales or Scotland or Ireland or non-gays!

When we add the figures from the U.S., Canada, Europe, Africa, Australia, the Far East, India, the Near East and South America . . . the task is indeed awesome. What price unity? Can we afford not to pay?

Ed.

NEW YORK/REV. ANN MONTAGUE

(Continued from page 2)

more votes than any other minority party candidate.

Converted to Christianity in 1972, she was a charter member of Metropolitan Community Church of Seattle, Washington. She became a deacon and was licensed an exhorter of the Seattle church in 1973. In September of that year she moved to Los Angeles in order to attend Samaritan Bible School, where most recently, she was a student body president. She was licensed a minister of UFMCC at General Conference last year.

She has been asked by the Board of Elders to serve as part of a missionary team to Australia and New Zealand from the end of March 1975 until the time of General Conference in Dallas.

Asked for her first impressions of New York she said, "Relatively speaking, the members of the congregation seem to have a better comprehension of what feminism is and its importance to our church. I do know it has come about through the hard struggle of our sisters in the church here, and I also know the work is not yet finished. But it encourages my soul to see the fruits of their labor . . . while there's much Christian love and warmth inside MCC, New York is a cruel city outside. The challenge of New York is overwhelming. There are so many people who desperately need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope and pray we will be able to give fuller life to many."

BOUQUETS & BRICKBATS

(Continued from page 4)

More and more interest has arisen about our mission. We have been fully accepted within the Gay Community, and during Rev. Lee Carlton's stay the Open Church Group met with representatives from the Ecumenical Center and the Ecu-

menical Church Service in Denmark. Our application for membership was unanimously supported by the Board of Directors of the above mentioned ecumenical organizations, and all literature which the Open Church Group will endeavor to publish or sell, will from now on be sold from the bookshop of the Ecumenical Center in Copenhagen. — Those of you who met me at General Conference will remember,

that in my address at the concluding evening service, I made those present pledge, that "they would not leave God alone, until our work had been abundantly blessed." — If there is anyone who doubts that prayer can move things, you just come and ask us in Copenhagen!!! God bless all of you!

With love in Christ,

father Bjørn

Meeting Schedule 1974-75

June 4 - 5
Elders Meeting (Dallas)
Plan General Conference

July 27 - 28
Elders Meeting (Dallas)
Pre-Conference Business

July 29 through August 3
General Conference (Dallas)

August 4 - 5
Elders Meeting (Dallas)
Post-Conference Business

October 22 - 23
Elders Meeting (Los Angeles)
Plan Ministers' Conference